

The Honorable Martha Elizabeth Keys
U.S. Representative of Kansas (1975–1979)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

“I Had Never Experienced a Great Deal of Inequity”

Representative Keys describes how she learned about gender inequality as a Member of Congress.
Interview recorded June 14, 2016

I didn't feel sexism particularly. Sure, some of the old Southern guys might call you "dear" or something. I ignored that. I knew people that said, "I wouldn't put up with that." To me that was, that had no meaning. What was meaningful was the conversation that you had with them. So, and again, I had never felt a great deal of inequity. I had to learn in reality. I had to get into Congress and learn the statistics to understand the tremendous inequity that women had. I had never felt it in my home. I certainly was never taught that growing up. Never—was always taught that I was smart and capable of making my own decisions. That was what my father really insisted on me. So I didn't feel that greatly. And I didn't feel it in Congress. Of course, part of it, once you get on Ways and Means, that kind of—no one feels sorry for you and they can't look down on you too much, either.